

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 IO-14 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 181546Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9352

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION BERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 18154

E.O. LL652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SPD PARLIAMENTARY LEADER
WEHNER

SUMMARY: IN A CONVERSATION DECEMBER L7 WITH THE
AMBASSADOR, SPD PARLIAMENTARY LEADER HERBERT WEHNER
VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED THE STATEMENT HE HAD MADE IN MOSCOW
ATTACKING THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO WERE, IN HIS VIEW,
OVERSTRAINING THE QUADRIpartite AGREEMENT ON BERLIN, EX-
PRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AFFECT-
ING THE SPD, AND COMMENTED ON THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION TO
FOREIGN MINISTER SCHEEL. END SUMMARY

L. FRANKLY AND SOMETIMES HEATEDLY, WEHNER STRONGLY
DEFENDED THE STATEMENTS WHICH HE HAD PUBLICLY MADE IN
MOSCOW, AND CONTINUED TO MAKE PRIVATELY ON HIS RETURN TO
THE FRG, CRITICAL OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHO
WERE ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE GAINS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK
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OF THE QUADRIpartite AGREEMENT ON BERLIN WHICH, IN

HIS VIEW, WENT BEYOND THE INTENT OF THE AGREEMENT AND THREATENED TO JEOPARDIZE SOVIET-GDR COMPLIANCE WITH THE MANY ADVANTAGEOUS ASPECTS OF THE AGREEMENT TO THE WEST. HE NOTED THAT, FROM THE OUTSET, HE HAD BEEN A STAUNCH DEFENDER OF THE AGREEMENT WHICH HAD BROUGHT GREAT AND OBVIOUS GAINS TO WEST BERLIN. IT SEEMED STUPID TO HIM TO PLACE UNNECESSARY STRAINS ON THE AGREEMENT. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE REFERRED TO THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE IN WEST BERLIN, AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER JUDICIAL ASSISTANCE FOR BERLINERS. A MODERATE APPROACH IN HIS VIEW WAS THE ONLY SENSIBLE ONE, AND HE HAD NO HESITATION ABOUT CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN THIS POSITION. PARENTHETICALLY, HE ADDED THAT DURING HIS VISIT TO MOSCOW HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE FREQUENT SOVIET REFERENCES TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES.

2. TURNING TO INNER-GERMAN DEVELOPMENTS, HE COMMENTED BITTERLY ON PEOPLE AROUND THE CHANCELLOR WHO WERE MISLEADING HIM AND HELPING TO CREATE THE PROBLEMS OF LEADERSHIP OF WHICH THE CHANCELLOR WAS NOW BECOMING MORE AND MORE AWARE. THESE SAME PEOPLE HAD ACTED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO CREATE PERSONAL STRAINS BETWEEN HIM AND THE CHANCELLOR. ALTHOUGH THEIR RELATIONS WERE NOW SOMEWHAT BETTER, HE COULD NOT BE SURE THEY WOULD EVER BE AS GOOD AS THEY WERE.

3. WEHNER EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE SPD. THE JUSOS (YOUNG SOCIALISTS) VIRTUALLY CONSTITUTED A PARTY WITHIN THE PARTY, AND IT WAS NOT AT ALL CLEAR WHETHER THEY WOULD BE ASSIMILATED OR WOULD BE ABLE EVENTUALLY TO THROW THE PARTY OFF COURSE. MANY OLDER SPD PEOPLE SPOKE OF CHANGING THE RADICAL VIEWS OF THE YOUNG BY GIVING THEM PARTY AND GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN THE HOPE THAT THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY WOULD HAVE A SOBERING EFFECT, BUT WHEN IT CAME TO ACTUALLY ALLOWING THEM INTO SUCH POSITIONS, THE PARTY MAJORITY REFUSED TO VOTE FOR THEM. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE CITED THE RECENT REJECTION OF JUSO CANDIDATES FOR THE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP.

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4. LOOKING AHEAD, HE SAW SOMBER PROSPECTS FOR THE SPD, WITH THE GOVERNMENT CERTAIN TO BE FACED IN 1974 WITH DIFFICULT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, BOTH OF A CYCLICAL NATURE AND ARISING OUT OF THE ENERGY CRISIS. THIS WOULD FURTHER DIMINISH THE POPULARITY OF THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HAD ALREADY SUFFERED A LOSS OF POPULAR SUPPORT. STATE ELECTIONS WOULD BE COMING UP LATE IN 1974 AND

BEYOND, WHICH MIGHT WELL RESULT IN SPD SETBACKS, EVEN
IF THE FDP GAINED. IF THE SPD TOOK LOSSES IN THE
NATIONAL ELECTIONS OF 1976 AND WAS NOT ABLE TO FORM A
GOVERNMENT, HE COULD ONLY BE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE
OUTLOOK. THE FIRST 20 YEARS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
WOULD NOT MERELY BE REPEATED. INSTEAD, THE DIVISIVE
FORCES WITHIN THE SPD WOULD TAKE OVER AND HE COULD NOT
BE CONFIDENT OF THE ULTIMATE DIRECTION THE PARTY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 18154

WOULD TAKE.

5. AS TO THE PROBLEM OF SCHEEL'S SUCCESSOR, WEHNER
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FINANCE MINISTER SCHMIDT WAS THE
LEADING CANDIDATE, BUT MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER
INTERIOR MINISTER GENSCHER, WHO WAS DESTINED TO BE
PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF THE FDP, WANTED TO PUT UP A
SERIOUS FIGHT FOR THE POSITION. BRANDT KNEW THIS

WOULD BE A MOST TROUBLESOME PROBLEM DURING THE FIRST PART OF 1974 AND HE HAD TRIED TO AVOID COMING TO GRIPS WITH IT BEFORE NEXT SPRING. THIS HAD ALREADY PROVED UNREALISTIC. WEHNER WENT ON TO EXPRESS DOUBT ABOUT SCHMIDT'S HEALTH, SAYING HE HAD HIS UPS AND DOWNS AND HE WAS NOT SURE WHICH WERE THE MOST DIFFICULT.

6. HIS (WEHNER'S) OWN HEALTH WAS AS GOOD AS COULD BE EXPECTED UNDER CONTINUING CIRCUMSTANCES OF OVERWORK AND LACK OF SLEEP. HE HAD MANAGED TO KEEP HIS DIABETIC CONFIDENTIAL

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CONDITION UNDER CONTROL DURING THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, AND NO LONGER REQUIRED INSULIN SHOTS BUT MERELY TABLETS. HE HOPED TO MAKE A TRIP TO THE U.S. IN 1974, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NO SPECIFIC PLANS AT THIS TIME. HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE AMBASSADOR FURTHER ABOUT THIS IN DUE COURSE.

7. COMMENT: WEHNER DID INDEED LOOK MORE VIGOROUS AND COMPOSED THAN DURING OUR LAST MEETING. AFTER THE POLITICAL STRAINS OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS IN MOSCOW AND THE CRITICISM WHICH HE HAD RECEIVED IN THE BUNDESTAG, HE REGARDS HIS RE-ELECTION AS PARLIAMENTARY LEADER (EVEN IF BY A SMALLER MARGIN) AS AN INDICATION OF BASIC CONFIDENCE IN HIS VIEWS. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRANDT, BUT BELIEVES IT IS ON THE WAY TO BEING AT LEAST PARTIALLY REPAIRED AS THE CHANCELLOR HAS COME TO RECOGNIZE MORE AND MORE WHAT BAD ADVICE HE GOT FROM THOSE AROUND HIM AND PRESUMABLY THE FOREIGN MINISTER. AN INDEFATIGABLE WORKER BEHIND THE* SCENES, WEHNER REMAINS A REAL POWER (SOME WOULD SAY THE REAL POWER) WITHIN THE SPD.

IF HE DOES DECIDE TO VISIT THE U.S. IN 1974, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT AN ALL-OUT EFFORT BE MADE TO INSURE THAT HIS VISIT IS A SUCCESS. HE IS A DIFFICULT, SOMETIMES EVEN IMPOSSIBLE MAN, BUT BASICALLY AN ELEMENT OF STABILITY WITHIN THE SPD WHOSE INFLUENCE WITH THE LEFT-WINGERS IN THE PARTY IS STILL SUFFICIENT TO PREVENT A DRIFT IN A COMPLETELY ABERRATIONAL DIRECTION. THERE ARE SOME WHO CLAIM THAT HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW REVIVED OLD MARXIST INSTINCTS, BUT HIS CLOSER ASSOCIATES DO NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE THE CASE. I HAVE KNOWN HIM LONG ENOUGH TO DOUBT THAT WEHNER HAS BEEN ANYTHING OTHER THAN WEHNER IN HIS RECENT EXPRESSIONS OF IMPATIENCE WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE RUNNING IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT.
HILLENBRAND

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